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Affirmation

United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns

General Conference 2008 Fort Worth, TX

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Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin

by Rev. Dr. Jeanne Knepper

Dave talked to me about a conversation he had with another visitor to this General Conference. Dave wears a badge with a picture of his son when the son was about 8 years old, a badge that says, "My child is of sacred worth." The two of them began to talk about the badge and why Dave wears it. Dave explained that he is longing for the time when his son, who is a gay man, can feel welcomed in the United Methodist Church. His conversation partner said, "But we don't say he isn't welcome. Of course he is welcome. We don't condemn your son. We just can't condone the practice of sinful behavior."

How often we hear it, *love the sinner, hate the sin.* If you imagine that sexual orientation is a chosen behavior, it seems so easy. If, on the other hand, you are living inside a way of being, it is harder to separate. For instance, let's suppose that you, the reader, are a heterosexual person and married. When you consider what you should make for dinner and think about the foods your spouse likes and dislikes, are you "practicing" your marriage? Are you

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Come to OUT! Awards Banquet

Join Affirmation, our OUT nominees, our United Methodist allies, and our Soulforce friends at a banquet celebrating those who boldly and vividly live OUT their faith and witness as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer United Methodist Christians. Come OUT! have fun, and join the party!

At the banquet two persons will be presented with an OUT Award. One award will be given to an OUT lay person (a non-credentialed and unpaid member / witness in the church.) The second will be given to an OUT professional (a credentialed and / or paid professional in the life of the church). Nineteen persons from all parts of the country have been nominated. Each has been invited to attend the banquet. All will be recognized and honored. The OUT award winners will be announced and presented at the banquet.

The festive banquet will be a Tapas Night where a variety of

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Pastoral Care Support Line 612-353-7445 thru end of GC

Soulforce Street Theatre Today 4/26 5:00 PM outside convention center.

Affirmation Out Awards Press Conference Today 4/26 5:30 PM Intermodal Transportation Center

Affirmation Out Awards Banquet Today 4/26 6:00 – 8:00 PM Intermodal

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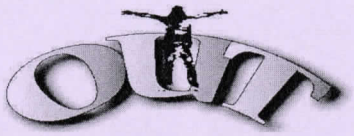

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Articles for the newsletter or comments may be sent to AffirmationNewsletter _at_yahoogroups.com.

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Mission Statement

As an independent voice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people, Affirmation radically reclaims the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ by relentlessly pursuing full inclusion in the Church as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community.

Adopted January 2005

*** Note: substitute the symbol "@" for the letters "_at_" in the email addresses.**

Black Clergy Allies Support LGBT United Methodists

As the UMC Commemorates the End of Segregation, Panel Reflects on Racism and Heterosexism in the Church

On Sunday delegates to the United Methodist General Conference will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the end of official segregation in the church. Created in 1939, the Central Jurisdiction was a race-based, non-geographical unit that formalized the exclusion of African Americans from white Methodist congregations and the exclusion of African American leaders from the governance of the denomination. It was abolished in 1968—14 years after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that separate is inherently unequal.

In 2007, the supreme court of the United Methodist Church granted local pastors sole authority to deny church membership to lesbian and gay applicants, effectively authorizing a new form of segregation. Prior to that decision, existing church policies already excluded gays and lesbians from the full life of the church by forbidding the celebration of same-sex unions and barring gays and lesbians from sharing their gifts as ordained ministers.

On Sunday afternoon, shortly after the UMC's official recognition of the end of Central Jurisdiction, four esteemed United Methodist clergy will share their reflections on the connection between racism and heterosexism in the church and add their voices to the calls for the United Methodist Church to include lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender United Methodists in marriage, membership, and ministry.

What: The Struggle Continues: Racism and Heterosexism in the Church.
When: 12:30-1:30 pm Sunday
Where: General Worth Square in downtown Fort Worth (9th and Main)
Who: Rev. Dr. James Lawson (retired), former President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and one of the architects of the Civil Rights movement.
Bishop Melvin Talbert (retired), former President of the National Council of Churches and former Director of Black Methodists for Church Renewal.
Rev. Gil Caldwell (retired), Former chairperson of Black Methodists for Church Renewal and former Co-convener of United Methodists of Color for A Fully Inclusive Church.

Soulforce is a national social justice and civil rights or-

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"practicing" your heterosexual orientation? What if your spouse is terribly ill and you need to go to the hospital to speak for him or her. Are you "practicing" your heterosexuality when you stay by his or her side, when you hold his or her hand while you wait for a return to consciousness? As you age and talk through the questions of supportive care and inheritances and providing for each other when the eventuality of death comes your way, are you "practicing" your heterosexuality?

> "Well, that's an odd way to look at it, you might say. I'm just doing what a married person does."

Well, that's an odd way to look at it, you might say. I'm just doing what a married person does. That's not about being heterosexual; that's about being married. And, that is exactly the point. When gay or lesbian people enter into relationship, the things they do together are very similar—make dinner, care for one another in illness, provide for one another in death. It's not about being homosexual, it's about being in love, in relationship.

But, of course, there is more than that to love and relationship. If you are married, you and your spouse almost certainly have portions of your relationship that are deeply private and precious to you. Pet names and special touches, a history of love, warmth, affection and passion, the part of your lives together that you don't share with anyone else, because it is far too private and precious to cheapen with public scrutiny. I often speak of this feeling with the phrase, "Sex isn't a spectator sport." Nor should it be. Not for heterosexuals, and not for anyone else.

Now, here is the challenge I would put to you. Have you ever in your life looked at a person you don't know and just known, without being told, that that person is gay or lesbian? And was it the case that you would have known it no matter how that person tried to hide their sexual orientation? If you have, then you confirm what we know, that being gay or lesbian is *who we are, not what we do.* That's a given and is non-negotiable. It is fair to ask anyone to live a life that is wholesome, loving, and non-exploitative. It is not fair to insist that the joys and responsibilities of committed relationship are only God-blessed for heterosexuals. To love someone, to care for them and argue and share home and bed, to play together and to take pleasure together in private, these are the blessings we mean when we say, as a church, *We recognize that sexuality is God's good gift to all persons. We believe persons may be fully human only when that gift is acknowledged and affirmed by themselves, the church and society.* All means all.

(Upcoming...Continued from page 1)

Transportation Center (tickets available at door $20.00)

Soulforce presents the documentary "For the Bible Tells Me So" Today 4/26 at dusk in General Worth Square, 9th and Main (Intermodal Transportation Center if it rains)

Soulforce Panel On History of Discrimination – Central Jurisdiction and LGBT Methodists Sun 4/27 12:30 PM General Worth Square

RMN Worship Sun 4/27 2:00 PM at First UMC Fort Worth, 800 W 5th St

Breakfast – Every day except Sun 7:30 – 8:30 AM, First Christian Church. Last breakfast Sat 5/3.

Lunch – Every day except Sun 12:00 – 2:30 PM , First Christian Church. Last lunch Fri 5/2.

MFSA Speaker series Every day except Sunday 1:15 – 2:00 PM , First Christian Church

Reconciling Closing Communion Fri 5/2 after GC ends. Late.

Transgender Press Conference Held

The transgender press conference was held at the Intermodal Transportation Center Thursday 4/24. Reverend Drew Phoenix, Sean Delmore, Diane DeLap, and Tina Seitz spoke. Troy Plummer noticed the logo on the podium and everyone decided that at that moment, the T was definitely for transgender.

Left to right: Sean Delmore, Rev Drew Phoenix, Diane DeLap, Tina Seitz.

Quote of the Day: ***If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality. -Desmond Tutu, clergyman (b. 1931)***

Free Outdoor Screening of *For The Bible Tells Me So*

Soulforce invites you and your friends to join us at 8:00 pm this evening for free dessert and a special outdoor screening of this prize-winning film in General Worth Square, Fort Worth, TX (corner of Main and 9th Street.) *For The Bible Tells Me So* producer, Daniel Karslake, as well as the Rev. Dr. Mel White, Rev. Jimmy Creech, and The Wallner Family (all featured in the film) will be in attendance. Come enjoy this important film and help us educate the Methodist delegates about religion-based discrimination at the same time!

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many tasty foods will be available in small portions. There will be vegetarian and vegan options.

The OUT Awards Banquet will be held at the Intermodal Transportation Center (ITC, aka "the clock tower building") 1001 Jones St. (9th and Jones) Saturday from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. Tickets are $20 and will be available at the door. See an Affirmation Council member (Jim Palmquist, Diane DeLap, David Meredith, Tim Tennant-Jayne) to purchase a ticket in advance.

Following the banquet, walk to General Worth Square for public witness and viewing the award-winning documentary *For The Bible Tells Me So*, presented by Soulforce.

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ganization. Our vision is freedom from religious and political oppression for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people through relentless nonviolent resistance.

Soulforce has been a voice for justice at General Conference since 2000, when Yolanda King and Arun Gandhi lead 200 people in an act of civil disobedience to call attention to the suffering caused by the UMC's anti-gay policies. One hundred ninety-one people were arrested on a single day, including two United Methodist Bishops. In 2004, Soulforce and its allies led a negotiated disruption of General Conference business.

For more information, visit www.soulforce.org.